

Vermont Public Service Department & Clean Energy
Development Fund

**Questions and Answers on the October 12, 2021
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
For the Administration of the
Vermont Small Scale Renewable Energy Incentive Program**

Updated on 10/21/2021 @ 11:00 PM

Question #1: Clarification of the contract period: On page 1, the RFP indicates the contract is expected to run approximately **3 years**, starting January 2022 and ending December 2024 or until the incentive funds are expended, while on page 5, the RFP asks for a **2 year** budget.

Answer #1:

- The contract period will be 2 years (thus ending in December of 2023) with an option to extend the contract to December of 2024.

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Question #2: On page 5, the RFP states \$2,500,000 of incentives would be awarded via the Program. Is this amount (a) exclusive of administrative costs? and (b) exclusive of the \$566,000 budgeted for fiscal year 2022 that is mentioned on page 1? In short, we are trying to better understand the approximate size of the incentive budget and whether that incentive budget will be used to pay for administrative expenses.

Answer #2:

- The \$2.5M estimate (at this time it is an estimate as the CEDF is seeking approval for the use of American Rescue Program Act (ARPA) funds) of funds for the program is (a) inclusive of administrative costs and (b) exclusive of the \$566,000 of existing CEDF funds that is budgeted for the program for the current 2022 fiscal year.

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Question #3: Who is the incumbent for this work and how long have they been performing the administration?

Answer #3:

- The Vermont Energy Investment Corporation is the incumbent contracted administrator and they have been under contracted for administrative services for the program since 2010.

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Question #4: Can you confirm that there will only be wood heating and wood storage projects throughout the duration of this contract and that solar or wind will not be available for applicants to receive incentives?

Answer #4:

- The CEDF can confirm that there are no plans for solar or wind incentives for the Small-scale Renewable Energy Incentive Program, and that there have not been any discussions at the CEDF about adding such incentives to the Program. However, the CEDF cannot guarantee that such incentives would not be discussed or contemplated for the program throughout the duration of this contract.

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Question #5: Can you confirm the 10-page limit is double sided or single sided?

Answer #5:

- The 10-page limit is for single sided pages. If respondents to this RFP deem that more pages are necessary, they can include a description of the information that would be on the additional pages and request that it be accepted. The CEDF will not accept additional pages unless first allowing additional pages to be submitted.

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Question #6: Is there an existing vendor for this program. If so, where would we be able to obtain a copy of the existing contract and when does that contract expire?

Answer #6:

- Yes (see question #3). Anyone that would like a copy of the current contract can send an email to: Andrew.Perchlik@Vermont.org requesting a copy of the contract.

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Question #7: What is the current administration budget for this program?

Answer #7:

- The current contract started in 2019 with a maximum payable amount of \$95,000. A subsequent amendment in 2021 raised that to \$118,700.00.

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Question #8: When does the PSD anticipate selecting a vendor, so that vendors can determine the lead time for the envisioned 2022 launch?

Answer #8:

- The plan is to select a contract in the first half of November, 2021.

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Question #9: Approximately how many incentive applications are anticipated per year under this program?

Answer #9:

- It is difficult to give an accurate approximation for the number applications as that will depend greatly on final program design. Over the last three years the number of incentives has ranged from ~100 to close to 400. However, the PSD is anticipating more funding for the program than was available in the last three years and thus the number of applications could be much higher than 400.

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Question #10: How is income verification currently conducted?

Answer #10:

- There is not currently at income verification requirements for the program.

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Question #11: What are the income limits? Is there a varying scale based on household size? Is there both a low and moderate income limit, or just one limit? Will CEDF and ARPA funded projects have different income criteria?

Answer #11:

- The income limits have yet to be established for the ARPA funded incentives. It is likely that the income eligibility will be based on household size, and geographical location. There will be both a low- and moderate-income criteria income levels. CEDF funded incentives will not likely have income eligibility requirements.

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Question #12: Will CEDF and ARPA funding need to be tracked separately, and if so what rules will be used to determine when CEDF funding is used for a project and when ARPA funding is used?

Answer #12:

- CEDF, ARPA, and any other funds will need to be tracked separately. Each funding source will fund different types of projects/incentives so there will not be a co-mingling of funds for any one incentive.

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Question #13: What is envisioned for the requirement to "Perform and report on monitoring and verification of incentive savings and performance of installed systems and/or measurers."? Does this include site visits to installed systems, and if so what percentage of systems must be visited each year?

Does it include ongoing remote readings of performance, and if so at what frequency and what type of measurements are required?

Answer #13:

- There will be a monitoring and verification portion of the contract for the administration of the Program. Details of the monitoring and verification scope of work will be negotiated with the selected contractor. In the past there have been site visits of 5-10% of the projects, but currently that is not the practice and if required will likely be under 5% of the projects. Verification and monitoring can be carried out via remotely contacting the Program participants and with photographic submissions by the participating installers.
- There will not likely be a requirement for remote readings of performance.

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Question #14: There is a requirement for "public outreach activities and education activities including customer service by phone, email, and at appropriate public events, including meetings

and community forums." How many public events, including meetings and community forums per year will be required?

Answer #14:

- The number of such events per year hasn't been determined. In the past it has not been more than four per year.

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Question #15: Can you elaborate more on the requirements that are envisioned for the scope item "Identification of selected Vermont populations to encourage their participation in the Program."? We are unsure of what this means.

Answer #15:

- This would be a requirement if certain populations are selected as a priority to be made aware of the program incentives. For example, the Program could require that a priority be made to reach out and provide incentive information to Vermonters that are Black, Indigenous, or that do not use English as their primary language.

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Question #16: There is a requirement to provide " A description of how installers will be selected and verified for quality installations for participation in the program." Is there a current practice in place for selecting and verifying installers? If so, can that process be provided. If not, can you elaborate on the desired level of selection and verification of installers? In other programs we run this ranges from ensuring they are in good standing as an entity and have an appropriate business license to an entire consumer protection division which publishes installer marketing guidelines, reviews advertisements and social media posts, accepts and adjudicates consumer complaints, and determines disciplinary action for installers who violate program guidelines. The range in cost between these is substantial, so an indication of what is desired here will help guide an accurate quote.

Answer #16:

- The current Program uses the Energy Excellent Network [<https://www.encyvermont.com/trade-partners/efficiency-excellence-network>] as a resource for installers as well as program requirements (i.e. certifications and attestations) of those installers that wish to participate in the program. The Program would not require an entire consumer protection plan/division as described in the question.

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Question #17: Some vendors have invested significant resources in the past to develop software and management tools to more efficiently run renewable programs which aren't reflected in a pure hourly rate. Is the PSD open to alternate pricing proposals which price on a per application processed or a firm fixed price basis.

Answer #17:

- Yes, but we would also like to see hourly rates as we are seeking a contractor that could also provide consulting services on an hourly basis not related to specific applications. For example, to assist with program design, or in outreach and education.

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Question #18: What weighting will be applied to each of the 3 evaluation criteria?

Answer #18:

- The Budget (costs/hourly rates) and the Experience & Qualifications are the primary evaluation criteria. The work plan is less important for this RFP and is likely going to account for ~20% of a proposals score.

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